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ABSTRACT

The study examined the effects of training 209 regular class elementary school students and their 12 emotionally disturbed classmates about handicapping conditions. Investigated were normal students' attitudes toward emotionally disturbed students, and the self esteem of emotionally disturbed students. Data gathered prior to and at the conclusion of the training program were obtained in classes containing mainstreamed emotionally disturbed students. Classes were randomly divided into a treatment and control group. Statistical analysis of questionnaire results using the analysis of covariance indicated that elementary students within the treatment group showed increased positive attitudes toward the handicapped and increased acceptance of mainstreamed emotionally disturbed students. (Author)

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ATTITUDE INFLUENCE AND ATTITUDE FORMATION OF NON-HANDICAPPED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AS RELATED TO THE MAINSTREAMING OF EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED STUDENTS*

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ABSTRACT

Attitude Influence and Attitude Formation of Non-Handicapped Elementary School Students as Related to the Mainstreaming of Emotionally Disturbed Students.

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects that training elementary school students about handicapping conditions has on: (1) their attitudes toward emotionally disturbed students, and (2) the self-esteem of emotionally disturbed students. Data gathered prior to and at the conclusion of the training program were obtained in classes containing mainstreamed emotionally disturbed students, and these classes were randomly divided into a treatment and control group.

Statistical analysis of questionnaire results using the analysis of covariance indicated that elementary students within the treatment group showed increased positive attitudes toward the handicapped and increased acceptance of mainstreamed emotionally disturbed students.

Programs designed to instruct general education students about handicapping conditions have been implemented in school systems across the nation (Friedman, 1985; Ballard, et al, 1977). The intent of these programs is to facilitate the mainstreaming process through a reduction of negative attitudes toward the handicapped. Considering the financial costs of these programs with regard to both materials and instructional time, it is essential to evaluate how effectively they have accomplished their designed intent.

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects that training third through sixth grade elementary school students about handicapping conditions has on: (1) their attitudes toward emotionally disturbed students, and (2) the self-esteem of emotionally disturbed students. To accomplish this purpose, it was necessary to analyze data collected prior to and immediately following a training program on handicapping conditions.

The training program was presented to elementary school general education classes which included mainstreamed emotionally disturbed students. Thurman and Lewis (1979) have found that the type of interaction taking place between emotionally disturbed students and their non-handicapped peers can affect the mainstreaming process, and that negative interactions are generally based on the prejudicial beliefs the non-handicapped have about the handicapped. The effectiveness of training programs designed to modify these types of attitudes among elementary school students at different grade levels has not been determined. To date, the effects of these training programs have only been studied with specific groups of students such as the mentally gifted or sixth graders (Lazar, Gensley and

Orpet, 1979; Siperstein, Bak and Gottlieb, 1977). The present investigation concentrated on providing a wide-range of training procedures across several grade levels.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Sample Selection

The subjects included in this study were emotionally disturbed students who were mainstreamed into regular education classes and the regular education students who attended these classes. They were from grades 3 through 6 in four elementary schools which had both a program for general education elementary students and a self-contained program for the emotionally disturbed. Each regular education classroom had either one or two mainstreamed emotionally disturbed students. These mainstreamed students were able to show emotional control for extended periods of time and they ranged from part- to full-time inclusion in general education. The regular education students were informed by their teachers that their mainstreamed classmates were enrolled in a special education program for students with learning and behavior problems, but they were not aware of the specific nature of each ED student's handicapping condition.

Two of these schools were randomly assigned to the treatment group (regular education students, N=209; emotionally disturbed students, N=12) and the remaining two schools served as the comparison group (regular students, N=344; emotionally disturbed students, N=11). The total number of classrooms in the treatment and control groups were 8 and 11 respectively. Table 1 shows the CA's and grade levels of these two groups.

TABLE 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Treatment and Control Groups

Treatment	Number of Students			Age		Grade Level	
	Boys	Girls	Total	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Regular Education	99	110	209	9.93	1.22	4.71	1.04
Emotionally Disturbed	8	4	12	10.42	1.38	4.75	1.22
Control							
Regular Education	175	169	344	9.96	1.08	4.75	1.01
Emotionally Disturbed	10	1	11	10.00	1.18	4.55	0.93

Training Techniques

This study used a pre-to posttest with control group design. In accordance with this design, eight training sessions (approximately one hour each) were presented in the classroom to the treatment group during an eight week period. These services were primarily based on Mainstreaming: What Every Child Needs to Know About Disabilities by Susan Bookbinder (1978) and Like It Is: Facts and Feelings About Handicaps From Kids who Know by Barbara Adams (1979). Each training activity attempted to desensitize non-handicapped elementary school students to handicapping conditions by involving them in activities that increased their understanding and toleration of handicapped students. It was expected that a greater understanding and toleration of handicapping conditions would decrease the fear and anxious curiosity that the non-handicapped feel toward the handicapped. This outcome, in turn, was anticipated to increase their acceptance of emotionally disturbed students. However, there was no intent in this study to produce an understanding

of formal definitions associated with various handicapping conditions, e.g., that mildly retarded children have an IQ between 50 and 70.

The training sessions involved instructing regular elementary school classes in grades three through six about different handicapping conditions. Three research assistants were trained to present the introductory unit and two of the training units in each of the treatment classes. Prior to and immediately following the implementation of the total instructional program, the research assistants also administered various questionnaires to both the treatment and control groups. To avoid possible embarrassment, the mainstreamed emotionally disturbed students were not present during periods when the testing and training sessions took place. Instead, they returned to their ED classes where they received scheduled lessons.

Materials such as books (stories) on different handicapping conditions comprehendible to elementary aged children, filmstrips, blindfolds, wheelchairs and hearing aids were used in the training sessions. In addition, students were allowed to discuss their feelings and reactions to what they learned among themselves and with the instructor. Other methods used to increase understanding about different handicapping conditions were role-playing activities, simulations and drawing pictures of handicapped children.

The following sequence of testing and training activities was used with each student in the treatment group:

1. Pretesting and introduction to handicapping conditions
2. Receiving information about and developing an understanding of the following handicaps:

   a. visual impairments
   b. hearing impairments

c. physical impairments
d. mental retardation
e. learning disabilities
f. emotional disturbance

3. Posttesting

Approximately 8 weeks lapsed between the control group's pre- and posttesting sessions. During the time of the treatment group's training, the control group received its usual instructional program.

Testing and Analysis Procedures

The pre- and posttesting occurred in the regular classes with the Attitude Towards Disabled Person Scale - Revised for Children (Friedman, 1975) and the Cowell Personal Distance Ballot (Cowell, 1963).
Form A of the Attitude Towards Disabled Person Scale (ATDP) was used on the pretest and form B was used on the posttest. Siller and Chipman (1964) determined the reliability of this former instrument to be .84, and Clarke and Greene (1958) reported that the Cowell's reliability was .91. It should be noted that an increase in pre- to posttest scores on the ATDP indicates improvement in attitudes about the handicapped, while a decrease in the Cowell scores is related to greater acceptance of handicapped students.

The emotionally disturbed students were pre- and posttested in resource rooms with the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale which has a Spearman-Brown reliability of .87 (Piers and Harris, 1969). Attainment of a higher score from the pre-to posttest on this instrument demonstrates improvement in students' self-concepts.

The analysis of covariance was used to compare the performance of the treatment and control groups. Thus, the pretest scores served as covariates

which enabled the effects of the treatment and control conditions to be validly compared on the posttest. The total scores on each questionnaire provided a stable measure of the results of the specific variables being tested. These scores were entered on a Hewlett-Packard 3000 computer, and the statistical analysis was made by using the SPSS program (1975).

RESULTS

Analysis of Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons Scale

Table II presents a summary of ATDP pre- to posttest results. This table shows that a statistically significant difference ($p < .01$) occurred between the treatment and control groups' ATDP pretest scores. Thus, the average pretest performance of the treatment group was 17.94 (SD=4.20, N=193), while the control group's average was 18.22 (SD=4.50, N=279). The declines in the N's of the treatment and control groups from the original

TABLE II

Analysis of Variance and Covariance for ATDP Pre- and Posttest Results: General Education Students (Covariates: ATDP pretest and age of students)

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	MS	F	P
Covariates					
Pretest	3,568.17	1	3,561.17	181.03	<.01
Age	54.65	1	54.65	2.77	NS
Main Effects					
A (Treatment)	1,525.09	1	1,525.09	77.38	<.01
B (Sex)	120.21	1	120.21	6.10	<.05
Interaction					
A x B	1.22	1	1.22	0.06	NS
Error	9,185.01	466	19.71		

sample sizes of 209 and 344 were caused by students being absent during either the pretest or posttest. However, these absences were similar and infrequent in each one of the 8 treatment and 11 control group classrooms. The average absences of these groups during the pretest were .63 (SD=.52, N=5) and 2.82 (SD=1.83, N=31) respectively, while their average absences during the posttest were 1.38 (SD=1.06, N=11) and 3.09 (SD=1.44, N=34). Therefore, it does not appear that the absence rates of these groups affected the results of this study.

The analysis of covariance presented in Table II indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in ATDP posttest scores (F=77.38, df=1/466, p <.01). This result demonstrates that the treatment group increased its acceptance of handicapped students because the adjusted posttest mean for this group (20.76) was higher than the adjusted posttest mean for the control group (17.10).

The analysis of covariance (Table II), also indicated that there was a statistically significant difference berween boys and girls in their ATDP posttest scores (F=6.10, df=1/466, p <.01). The adjusted posttest mean for the girls (M=19.10) was higher than the adjusted posttest mean for the boys (M=18.09).

ANALYSIS OF COWELL PERSONAL DISTANCE BALLOT

A summary of the Cowell results is presented in Table III. These results show that a statistically significant difference (p <.01) was found between the treatment and control groups' average pretest scores. The average pretest scores for the treatment and control groups were 5.39 (SD=1.55, N=187) and 5.11 (SD=1.69, N=278) respectively.

TABLE III

Analysis of Variance and Covariance for Cowell Results:

General Education Students
(Covariates: Cowell Pretest and Age of Students)

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	MS	F	P
Covariates					
Pretest	452.07	1	452.07	263.51	<.01
Age	10.03	1	10.03	5.85	<.05
Main Effects					
A (Treatment)	16.09	1	16.09	9.38	<.01
B (Sex)	13.63	1	13.63	7.95	<.01
Interaction					
A x B	1.74	1	1.74	1.01	NS
Error	787.46	459	1.72		

The analysis of covariance (Table III), indicated a significant difference ($F=9.38$, $df=1/459$, $p<.01$) between the average Cowell posttest scores of the treatment and control groups, and the adjusted posttest mean for the treatment group (5.03) was less than the adjusted posttest mean for the control group (5.41). Therefore, the treatment group increased its acceptance of emotionally disturbed students while the control group decreased its acceptance of these students.

The analysis of covariance also showed there was a statistically significant difference ($F=7.95$, $df=1/459$, $p<.01$) between boys and girls. In this comparison, the adjusted posttest means revealed the girls to be less accepting of emotionally disturbed children than the boys; the adjusted means for these groups were 5.43 and 5.08 respectively.

ANALYSIS OF PIERS-HARRIS CHILDREN'S SELF-CONCEPT SCALE

The Piers-Harris questionnaire was administered to all twelve emotionally disturbed students (8 boys, 4 girls) enrolled in the same classes as the treatment group. The average CA and grade level of these handicapped students were 10.42 (SD=1.38) and 4.75 (1.22) respectively. A similar group of eleven emotionally disturbed students (10 boys, 1 girl) was selected from the control group classes, and their average CA and grade level were 10.00 (SD=1.18) and 4.55 (SD=0.93) respectively.

The results of the Piers-Harris total scores are presented in Table IV. Although the treatment group made significantly greater pre-to posttest gains than the control group, the difference between their average posttest scores was not significant by using the analysis of covariance (df=1/19, F=1.49, NS).

TABLE IV

Average Pre-to Posttest Scores on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale

Treatment Group	Pretest	Posttest	df	t-value
Mean	59.50	64.67	11	2.54*
SD	11.10	9.18		
Control Group				
Mean	52.18	54.64	10	1.37
SD	12.89	12.70		

* P <.05

CONCLUSIONS

The intent of this study was to determine whether or not instructing non-handicapped children on different handicapping conditions improved their acceptance and understanding of these conditions. The ultimate goal of this study was to improve the mainstreaming process of emotionally disturbed students through a decrease in the prejudicial beliefs on the part of nondisabled students toward handicapped students.

The findings indicated that an instructional program about handicapping conditions can improve both the attitudes of general education students toward the handicapped and their acceptance of mainstreamed emotionally disturbed students. The results of an analysis of covariance of the ATDP and the Cowell tests showed a significant improvement in the attitudes of non-handicapped students toward the handicapped. The findings also showed an increased acceptance of mainstreamed emotionally disturbed students. The analysis of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale given to the mainstreamed emotionally disturbed students in both groups indicated an increase in self-esteem, although the mean for the treatment group was higher than that of the control group. Thus, implementing a program on handicapping conditions within mainstreaming classes tends to have a positive effect, perhaps due to the improved attitudes of the regular education students towards handicapping conditions in general.

During the course of this study, several unexpected results were found. An analysis of covariance of the Cowell test results showed a statistically significant difference ($p < .01$) between boys and girls. The girls appeared to be less accepting of emotionally disturbed children than the boys. Further research must be conducted to determine the reasons behind this finding.

The researchers also found an unexpected decrease in the acceptance of mainstreamed emotionally disturbed students in the control group. One explanation for this finding may be that the general education students never resolved the concerns and fears they had toward the label "emotionally disturbed" and the behavioral and learning characteristics exhibited by the emotionally disturbed students. Over time, these unresolved concerns and fears may have broadened the social distance between the general education students and the emotionally disturbed students.

The results of this study support the need for a training program on handicapping conditions to be implemented in elementary classes which contain mainstreamed emotionally disturbed students. The findings also reinforce the conclusion of previous research which indicates that mainstreaming can be facilitated through a planned instructional program (Lazar, Gensley, and Orpet, 1971; Ballard, Corman, Gottlieb, and Kaufman, 1977; and Siperstein, Bak, and Gottlieb, 1977).

Utilization of these training procedures can provide special and general education teachers with the type of curriculum needed to carry out a successful mainstreaming program. This study clearly demonstrates that to foster the acceptance of emotionally disturbed students, the non-handicapped students must be sensitized to the needs and abilities of handicapped students. Therefore, this study provides evidence supporting the need to incorporate training programs about handicapping conditions into the instructional activities of elementary schools where they are not currently being used.

Further research is necessary to determine if training elementary students about handicapping conditions can increase the acceptance of mainstreamed handicapped students other than the emotionally disturbed. Additional research is also needed to determine whether modifications of this training program can be effective in facilitating mainstreaming at the junior and senior high school levels. This study provided the first steps in indicating that mainstreaming emotionally disturbed students can be facilitated through the training of elementary students about handicapped students.

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